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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000685

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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E.LOKEN AND L.DOBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B.PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: WELSHMAN NCUBE ON SADC NEGOTIATIONS, MDC SPLIT

REF: HARARE 552

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Glenn Warren under 1.4 b/d

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) Welshman Ncube, MDC pro-Senate faction secretary-general and one of the MDC negotiators in the

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SADC-sponsored Zimbabwe talks, told us he was "cautiously optimistic" about the talks. Contrary to news reports, ZANU-PF was still engaged and discussions had taken place on a new constitution. If a national election takes place as scheduled, Ncube believed that only a united or coalition MDC could prevail. Although several days earlier, Ncube's MDC faction had announced it would go it alone and field its own candidates, Ncube said the pro-Senate faction was still willing to negotiate a coalition agreement. Turning to elections, Ncube said U.S. assistance was important. He thought U.S. assistance had been slanted toward the other faction. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Visiting Staffdel Phelan and polecon chief met with Ncube on July 31.

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Focus on SADC  
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[1](#)3. (C) Noting news reports that ZANU-PF was not seriously engaged in the Mbeki-led SADC negotiations, Ncube said that in fact substantial progress had been made on negotiating a

new constitution. Negotiators were using the 2002 draft constitution negotiated by Ncube and ZANU-PF Minister of Justice Patrick Chinimasa that was subsequently rejected by their superiors.

¶4. (C) Acknowledging that President Mugabe, in his address to Parliament last week and in other speeches had maintained a new constitution was not required and that any necessary changes could be made through Amendment 18 (Ref), Ncube maintained that this was political posturing. South African mediators had made clear in the talks that the proposals contained in Amendment 18 should be considered in the context of the negotiations, and that it would be bad faith for Mugabe and ZANU-PF to move unilaterally in Parliament for its adoption.

¶5. (C) Ncube was "cautiously optimistic" about the SADC talks. ZANU-PF had not walked out and had made some compromises. At the beginning of the talks, ZANU-PF had promised to negotiate in good faith. He pointed out that at the opening of Parliament, the Tsvangirai-led faction had attended for the first time, and Mugabe in his remarks had not criticized the MDC.

¶6. (C) Ncube credited continuous pressure by the U.S. and EU for forcing Mugabe into the SADC negotiations. According to Ncube, Mugabe knows that the West blames him for having brought Zimbabwe to the brink of destruction, while he would view his legacy as having stood up to imperialism. Any solution to the Zimbabwean crisis, therefore, would have to come from Africa so that Mugabe could say he had stood up to the West and Africans had helped him solve Zimbabwe's problems.

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¶7. (C) Finally, Ncube opined that if negotiations leading to elections were successful, elections could not reasonably be held in March. Additional time would be necessary to implement constitutional and electoral changes to create a level electoral playing field.

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Decision to Go It Alone Not Final  
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¶8. (C) Ncube reviewed the history of the MDC split. He argued that negotiators had signed a coalition agreement in April under which sitting parliamentarians would keep their seats in the next elections, and there would be a 50-50 allocation to each faction of candidacies for ZANU-PF-held seats and proportional distribution of ministers under a new government. Tsvangirai's faction then insisted on a new agreement that would provide for a nominating process for all seats, including those currently held by the pro-Senate faction.

¶9. (C) Ncube admitted that the Tsvangirai faction was stronger. Nevertheless, to defeat Mugabe would require both factions working together. He and faction president Arthur Mutambara had said they were open to further negotiations; Tsvangirai had not indicated, however, any interest. With

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time to elections running out, Ncube said his faction felt it had no choice but to strike out on its own. Ncube stated his faction, at this point in time, was still open to negotiations to achieve a coalition. The ball was in Tsvangirai's court.

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¶10. (C) According to Ncube, the absence of an MDC coalition would not directly affect the SADC negotiations. He and anti-Senate secretary-general Tendai Biti would continue to work well together. He believed the South Africans would

ignore the internal MDC problems for now and continue with the negotiations.

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U.S. Assistance Crucial  
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¶11. (C) Ncube was appreciative of U.S. assistance to democratic forces in Zimbabwe. He thought the U.S. could continue to play an important role through voter education and strengthening election capability and suggested this could be done through SADC. Ncube also commented that he thought U.S. assistance in the past had been slanted toward the anti-Senate faction.

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Comment  
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¶12. (C) We believe that Mugabe is not genuinely interested in negotiations, currently intends to stand for election, and intends to insure that he wins. Part of his reelection and succession plan is Amendment 18 which, inter alia, would increase the size of Parliament and gerrymander districts. An acid test of ZANU-PF's willingness to negotiate with the MDC through SADC will be whether it tries to push the amendment through the new session of Parliament, or whether the substance of the amendment is revised as a consequence of the South African talks.

¶13. (C) As to the MDC split, there is no question that the

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Tsvangirai faction has the lion's share of grass roots

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support. Nevertheless, a split MDC (especially one in whose leaders engage in mutual mudslinging) will play into Mugabe's hands and foster voter apathy. The announced decision of the pro-Senate faction to go it alone was an effort to force Tsvangirai and company to negotiate and make concessions.

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Mutambara, Ncube, and their followers are hoping Tsvangirai will conclude he needs them to have a good chance of winning. However, although most MDC members and parliamentarians from both sides would like to see a coalition, the personal animus between Tsvangirai and Ncube does not augur well. End  
Comment.  
DHANANI